



Christopher Little: A giant on a mission for greatness

Hundreds gathered to reflect and release balloons in memory of ‘a beacon of light’

By Gail H.M. Brown, Ph.D.
Contributing Writer

Hundreds gathered in the field of Jim Hill High School (JHHS) Tuesday, Dec. 19, at 3 p.m. to reflect on the life and musical legacy of Christopher Little. They also celebrated his life with a balloon release.

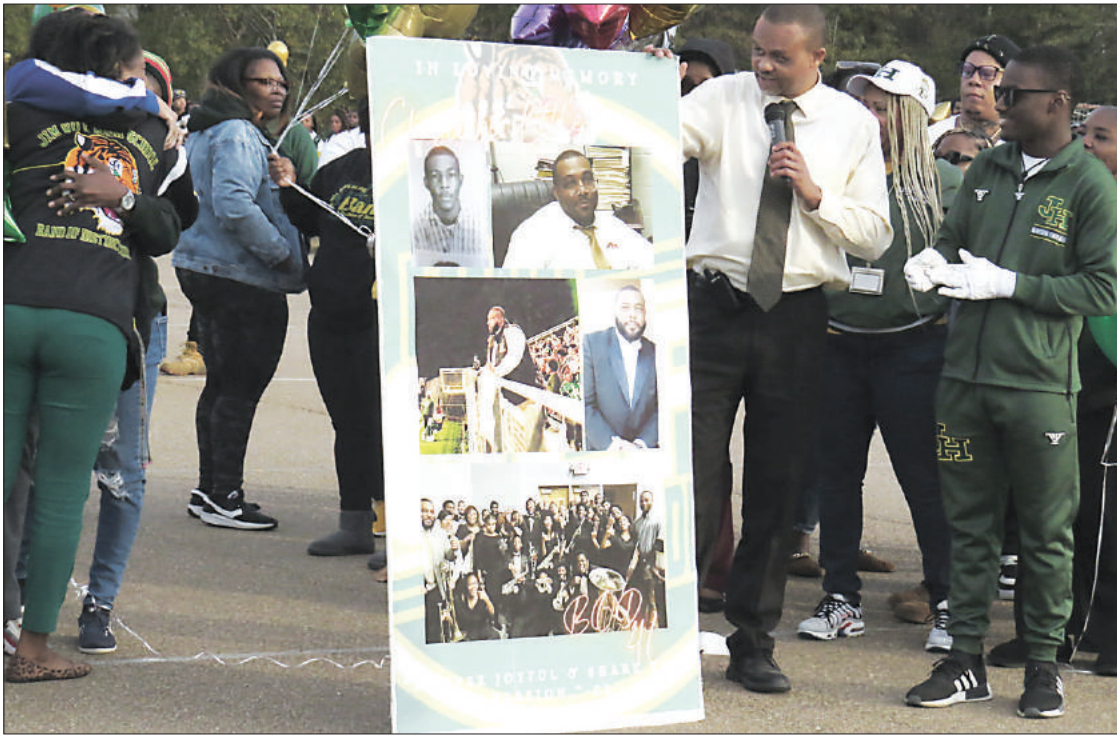
Little died Sunday, Dec. 17 unexpectedly according to reports. Many who knew him said the news of his departure sent a shockwave of crying and other emotions around the City of Jackson and on social media, especially among his students.

Below Jackson Public Schools released a statement regarding his death:

“It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of our dear Chris Little, who served as the esteemed band director at Jim Hill High School. Mr. Little left an indelible mark on countless lives through his passion for music. A distinguished former member of the JSU Sonic Boom Marching Band, he consistently inspired his students to achieve their best, demanding nothing short of excellence. His impact will endure through the numerous individuals he influenced within the Jackson Public Schools community and throughout the city of Jackson. To assist those in need, grief counselors are available on-site at Jim Hill High School to provide support during this difficult time.”

At Tuesday’s celebration, Principal Bobby D. Brown stood in the center of a huge circle of attendees holding a life-size display board with a collage of Little’s photos.

“Little was a person who up-



At Tuesday’s celebration, Jim Hill HS Principal Bobby D. Brown stood in the center of a huge circle of attendees holding a life-size display board with a collage of Little’s photos PHOTOS BY EDDIE BROWN

lifted so many. He used music education to cognitively develop scholars but not only here at Jim Hill but also beyond,” Brown said.

Following Brown’s remarks, several students, former students, band parents, colleagues and others also shared fond memories of Little. Many became emotional but managed to compose themselves. One parent leader said they supported the band because they knew “Mr. Little could not do it all alone.”

In a tribute, Emmanuel Jackson shared: “Mr. Little, You were a beacon of light that is unmatched . . . I will never forget the lessons that you taught me over the years...And how much of a father figure you have been to me and many generations before

me.” Jackson then led the band in a chant of its motto: “One Band, One Sound, One Family; Love the Band!”

Former Jim Hill Band Director Charles Bradley also paid tribute. “This is hard, but my God knows best,” Bradley said. “To have known Chris is to have known a young man who loved people.” Bradley is also credited with naming Little as his predecessor. “This guy spent a lot of time at Jim Hill molding his craft,” he expressed.

Retired Educator/Band Director Jennifer Lloyd of Hardy Middle School reflected on first meeting Little as a “little” lad running in the halls with others. She said she stopped him, and he looked up at her and became very humbled when she introduced herself

as the band teacher.

“He lived with his grandmother [then], and had this sweet spirit about him. He was old school respectful like yes ma’am, no ma’am,” Lloyd said. She said he kept that respectful mannerism even up to the last time she saw him.

“He was always working towards something bigger and better, and it was always inclusive of the whole crew,” Lloyd said.

Lloyd served in Jackson Public Schools for 38 years.

Little, a Murrah High School graduate who attended the Academic and Performing Arts Center, had served as Director of Bands at JHHS for 14 years.

“He and I came to Jim Hill at

Little
Continued on page 3

A dream for Christmas in Mississippi

Nearly all say they love God in MS, imagine if that were true



Extending light. PHOTO BY CHRIS YOUNG

By Christopher Young
Contributing Writer

COMMENTARY

Any day is a day to reflect on the love of God. God doesn’t love us because we are good, He loves us because He is good. We call him by different names as there are so many different faiths and/or religions – HaShem, Messiah, Jah, Jesus, The Light, Jehovah, Allah, Bhagavan, Great Spirit and Wahaguru, just to name a few.

How many of us sincerely reflect or meditate upon the love of God and his teachings day in and day out?

Now Christmas is at hand

and it’s a big deal – Christ’s birthday. On Christmas we have traditions, rituals, special religious services. Are we drawn into a deeper reflection of God than we are on the other 364 days of the year? Many of us are drawn into something, that’s for sure.

From most accounts, the baby Jesus was born in the most modest of environments – a peasant house on the ground floor where the animals stayed.

Christmas
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Hinds County Tax Collector and staff hold annual Christmas social event



Warren County Tax Collector Elect Amanda Battle PHOTOS BY MATTHEW HENDERSON



Yazoo County Tax Collector Denise Robertson

By Jackie Hampton
Publisher

Hinds County Tax Collector Eddie J. Fair and staff held their annual Christmas social Friday, December 17, where friends, community leaders, legislators and others gathered to enjoy good food, entertainment, door prizes and dancing. It was held at the Clinton Event Center in Clinton, MS from

7 p.m.-10 p.m. Newly elected Warren County Tax Collector Amanda Haggard Battle attended the event along with her husband, Benjamin.

Battle stated that she had worked in the Warren County Tax Collector’s office for 25 years and on several occasions she visited Fair’s

Hinds
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Smarty Pants’ final farewell to school children

By Jackie Hampton
Publisher

After thirty years of educating children, teaching them the importance of having an education, the importance of loving themselves, and giving practical life surviving techniques, Charles Smarty Pants King, Jr. said goodbye on Monday, December 17, at 10:30 a.m. at the Global Connection Daycare Center located in the Jackson Medical Mall.

King, a native of Memphis, TN, spent most of his life in Michigan. He developed an early interest in art, but temporarily abandoned his creative pursuits in the fifth grade because a teacher told him that he “could not draw.” It was a temporary halt because he later pursued his talents.

He is the founder of Smarty



Charles King with his educational character Smarty Pants.

Pants Educational Services, Inc. It is unique because it uses magic, brain teasers and art work in teaching. King told *The Mississippi Link* that the name on his birth certificate is Charles Smarty Pants

Henry King, Jr. He said, “In 1992, Attorney Robert Smith went to Memphis where I was born and the judge awarded me the right to add Smarty Pants to my name.”

He has collaborated with Jack-

son Public Schools, youth detention centers, drug counseling centers, Boys & Girls Clubs and other entities to promote comprehensive drug education to individuals in the community.

On Monday, King gave the daycare students, teachers and administrators parting gifts. Each child received a copy of his book, “My Pants Make Me Smart,” along with other gifts.

The children repeated after him life-long lessons and demonstrated with him The Smarty Pants Interlock: Up with Education and Down with Drugs. He reminded them if their clothes ever catch on fire to stop, cover their face, get down and get their roll on. This tip and others are in the book he gave them.

See photos on page 4.

Inside

Alcorn and Coach Fred McNair part ways

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Our Secret Society

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A look inside the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals

By Christopher Young
Contributing Writer

The Fifth Circuit has long been called the most conservative Federal Court of Appeals in the nation. In 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals Reorganization Act divided the court and created a new circuit. The judicial districts of Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and the Canal Zone remained with the Fifth Circuit, while the judicial districts in Alabama, Georgia and Florida became part of the Eleventh Circuit.

When we examine the racial makeup of the Court’s seventeen active justices, we discover that there are eight White males, four White females, two Black males, one Black female, one Asian male, and now, one Hispanic female.

Over 70% of the active justices are white, yet the average white population of Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas is 51.2%. Conversely, the black makeup of the Court is 17.6%, while the average black population of Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas is 28%.

When adding the racial makeup of the ten additional senior status justices, who typically, but not always, maintain a reduced caseload – eight of the ten are White; increasing the overall racial makeup of this Court to 74+



En Banc Courtroom – Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals at the John Minor Wisdom United States Court of Appeals Building in New Orleans
PHOTO: [HTTPS://WWW.CA5.USCOURTS.GOV](https://www.ca5.uscourts.gov)

COMMENTARY

percent White, and again, the jurisdiction they serve is 51.2% white.

Seventy-five percent of the justices serving on the Fifth Circuit were appointed by Republican presidents, second only to the 91% on the Eighth Circuit, per an article published earlier this month by <https://news.bloomberglaw.com>.

All of this is important for several reasons; not only do citizens of Mississippi not have a Federal Appeals Court that looks like they do, but the Court has a long

history of being far-right in their decisions, and here in Mississippi we currently have two very important cases before that Court; the restoration of voting rights for felons who have served their sentence and control of the Jackson Airport.

On August 4, 2023, a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, “struck down Mississippi’s lifetime ban on voting for people convicted of certain felonies, saying it is unconstitutional because it inflicts cruel and unusual punishment,” per *Mississippi Today*. The ruling was 2-1, and of interest, the



Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals
Judge Irma Carrillo Ramirez,
[HTTPS://BALLOTPEDIA.ORG/IRMA_RAMIREZ](https://ballotpedia.org/Irma_Ramirez)

two justices in the majority were both appointed by Democratic presidents. The dissent was by a justice appointed by President Reagan. As many expected, Mississippi’s Attorney General Lynn Fitch, who opposed the lawsuit that sought to restore felons voting rights, and after the decision of the three-judge panel, requested an en banc review by the Court, which vacates the earlier ruling. She is dead set on ensuring that an estimated 200,000+ felons, who have done their time, never regain the rights of full citizenship.

The Jackson-Medgar Wiley Evers International Airport case will also be heard by the full Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals,

presumably in early 2024. It won’t be the first time; this has been going on for years. Republican legislators simply decided in 2016, that the airport should not belong to Jackson, but should be a regional airport. The heck with the City of Jackson having such a large economic engine – we’ll take it away from them, reducing the autonomy of Jackson citizens, reducing revenue for the City of Jackson, just because. How many other airports has the legislature taken over in Mississippi? Have they attempted to take over the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport? No, they have not. Just ours, just the airport that belongs to the majority black City of Jackson.

Remember this WLBT article on March 5, 2021? “I sat down with the lieutenant governor to talk about Jackson’s infrastructure problem. We had a conversation that lasted for about an hour and a half, and he asked everyone to leave the room only to say, ‘Mayor, I need you to give me my airport, and I look at it for about \$30 million,’” Lumumba said. “Not only am I supposed to be dumb, (but) I’m also supposed to be cheap.”

So, this is what we must look forward to at the traditional intersection of justice and law at the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Looking backward, we never forget the namesake of the U.S. Court of Appeals building in New Orleans – Justice John Minor Wisdom. Upon his death, *The New York Times* wrote on May 16, 1999 of the white Republican, “Judge John Minor Wisdom, the New Orleans legal scholar who wrote opinion after opinion that desegregated courthouses throughout the Deep South and put blacks on juries, in the voting booth, in state legislatures and in integrated classrooms, died yesterday in New Orleans...” Judge Wisdom wrote the opinion that allowed James Meredith to attend the University of Mississippi, the first black student to do so. In 1967 he wrote the majority opinion in *United States v. Jefferson County*, the case that, as he recalled, “really started affirmative action.”

A bright note: Earlier this month, a Hispanic woman, the second nominee by President Biden – Judge Irma Carrillo Ramirez – was commissioned to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals following her Senate confirmation vote of 80-12. “Ramirez spoke during her confirmation hearing of growing up in the tiny town of Tokio, Texas, where her family toiled in the cotton fields,” per *Texas Metro News* on June 14, 2023.

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Smarty Pants Farewell

Global Connection Daycare Learning Center • Jackson Medical Mall, Jackson, MS • Dec. 18, 2023

PHOTOS BY JACKIE HAMPTON



Black child, 10, sentenced to probation and a book report for urinating in public



This Jan. 27, 2021 image provided by The Tate Record shows a Senatobia Police vehicle in front of the Senatobia, Miss., Police Department. A 10-year-old black child, who was arrested by the police after urinating in a parking lot, must serve three months' probation and write a two-page book report on the late NBA star Kobe Bryant, a Tate County Youth Court Judge ruled Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2023. THE TATE RECORD VIA AP|ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Michael Goldberg
Associated Press/Report for America

A 10-year-old black child who urinated in a parking lot must serve three months' probation and write a two-page book report on the late NBA star Kobe Bryant, a Mississippi judge has ordered.

Tate County Youth Court Judge Rusty Harlow handed down the sentence Tuesday after the child's lawyer reached an agreement with a special prosecutor. The prosecution threatened to upgrade the charge of "child in need of supervision" to a more serious charge of disorderly conduct if the boy's family took the case to trial, said Carlos Moore, the child's attorney.

"I thought any sensible judge would dismiss the charge completely. It's just asinine," Moore said. "There were failures in the criminal justice system all the way around."

Moore said he doesn't believe a white child would have been arrested under similar circumstances, and he couldn't find a similar instance of a child receiving a similar sentence for the same offense.

"I don't think there is a male in America who has not discreetly urinated in public," Moore said.

The child's mother has said her son urinated behind her vehicle while she was visiting a lawyer's office in Senatobia, Mississippi, on Aug. 10. Police officers in the town of about 8,100 residents, 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of Memphis, Tennessee, saw the child urinating and arrested him. Officers put him

in a squad car and took him to the police station.

Senatobia Police Chief Richard Chandler said the child was not handcuffed, but his mother said he was put in a jail cell, according to NBCNews.com.

Days after the episode, Chandler said the officers violated their training on how to deal with children. He said one of the officers who took part in the arrest was "no longer employed," and other officers would be disciplined. He didn't specify whether the former officer was fired or quit, or what type of discipline the others would face.

Chandler did not immediately respond to a voicemail message Thursday. Reached by phone, a staffer for Paige Williams, the Tate County Youth Court prosecutor appointed to handle the case, said the attorney could not comment on cases involving juveniles.

Rashad Robinson, president of the civil rights organization Color Of Change, said the decision to charge the child didn't make sense.

"Nothing about this case from the decisions by the police, the prosecutor and the judge makes us safer or is a good use of taxpayer resources," Robinson said in a statement.

He said there is a "long and unforgivable history in Mississippi and across the country" of a "two-tiered justice system" that offers one path for black children and another for white.

It was initially unclear whether prosecutors would take up the case.

Moore requested a dismissal, but prosecutors declined. He planned on going to trial but shifted strategy after prosecutors threatened to upgrade the charges. The child's family chose to accept the probation sentence because it would not appear on the boy's criminal record. The 10-year-old is required to check in with a probation officer once per month.

Williams initially wanted the child to write a report on "public decency," but the judge changed the subject to Bryant because the boy is a basketball fan, Moore said.

Marie Ndiaye, deputy director of the Justice Project at the Advancement Project, a racial justice organization, said the arrest is emblematic of broader issues in the criminal justice system.

"Sentencing anyone, let alone a young child, to probation under these facts is sure to add to the trauma and denigration this child has suffered since the arrest," Ndiaye said. "This is all the more proof that we need to severely limit police interactions with civilians, from petty retail theft to traffic stops and even so-called 'quality of life' offenses. For black people in America, it is a matter of life and death."

Michael Goldberg is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow him at @mikergoldberg.

Grand jury declines to charge Mississippi police officer who shot 11-year-old boy

By Michael Goldberg
Associated Press/Report for America

A Mississippi grand jury has declined to bring charges against a police officer who responded to a call, and shot and wounded an unarmed 11-year-old boy inside the home.

The grand jury found that Indianola Police Sgt. Greg Capers did engage in criminal conduct when he shot Aderrien Murry in the chest on May 20 while responding to a domestic dispute. Murry was hospitalized for five days with a collapsed lung, lacerated liver and fractured ribs from the gunshot wound in his chest.

The Mississippi Attorney General's Office, who presented the case to a Sunflower County grand jury, announced the decision Thursday. In a written statement, Carlos Moore, Murry's attorney, said the family would seek accountability through a federal civil lawsuit.

"While the grand jury has spoken, we firmly believe that there are unanswered questions and that the shooting of Aderrien Murry was not justified," Moore said. "We are committed to seeking justice for Aderrien and his family."

Reached by phone Thursday, Michael Carr, Capers' attorney, said the officer had suffered personally and financially due to the case and that the grand jury made the right decision.

"Sgt. Capers is relieved at the result, and he is glad that the citizens of Sunflower County reached the fair and correct result," Carr said. "He is looking forward to continuing to serve the citizens of Sunflower County and the city of Indianola."

The Indianola Board of Aldermen voted in June to place Capers on unpaid administrative leave. Capers cannot return to work and get paid unless the Board votes to take him off leave, Carr said.

Indianola is a town of about 9,300 residents in the rural Mississippi Delta, about 95 miles (153 kilometers) northwest of Jackson.



Aderrien Murry was shot and wounded by Indianola Police Department officer. PHOTO PROVIDED BY NAKALA MURRY – AP FILE

On the May evening of the shooting, Nakala Murry asked her son to call the police around 4 a.m. when the father of one of her other children showed up at her home, Moore said. Two officers went to the home, and one kicked the front door before Nakala Murry opened it. She told them the man they called about had left, and that three children were inside the home, Moore said.

According to Nakala Murry, Capers yelled into the home and ordered anyone inside to come out with their hands up, Moore said. He said Aderrien Murry walked into the living room with nothing in his hands, and Capers shot him in the chest.

The Murry family has filed a federal lawsuit against Indianola, the police chief and Capers. The lawsuit, which seeks at least \$5 million, says Indianola failed to properly train the officer and that Capers used excessive force.

With the grand jury's decision, the Attorney General's Office said no further criminal action at the state level would be taken against Capers.

Representatives Karriem and Summers issue response to the criminal justice system's negligence of Aderrien Murry and Quantavious Eason

Mississippi Link Newswire

Mississippi State House Representative of District 41, Kabir Karriem and State Representative of District 68, Zakiya Summers issued a joint statement Dec. 18 in response to the criminal justice system's negligence of Aderrien Murry and Quantavious Eason.

"We are deeply troubled by recent events that have exposed serious injustices and misguided judgments within our law enforcement system. The irresponsible shooting of 11-year-old Aderrien Murry in Indianola, Mississippi and the arrest of 10-year-old Quantavious Eason in Senatobia, Mississippi have highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive reform to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all of our citizens, particularly our youth.

"The shooting of Aderrien Murry is a tragic example of the devastating consequences of law enforcement failing to protect and serve our communities, especially our most vulnerable members. It is incomprehensible that a child who called 911 for help found himself in a situation where his life was put in jeopardy.

The grand jury's determination that there was no criminal conduct on behalf of the officer who shot and wounded Aderrien Murry raises serious concerns about the standards by which law enforcement actions are judged. The extent of Aderrien's injuries, including a collapsed lung, fractured rib and lacerated liver, underscores the grave impact of this incident on his young life and the profound trauma it has caused for his family and the community as a whole.

"Equally distressing is the case of Quantavious Eason, a 10-year-old boy who found himself in the backseat of a police cruiser after attempting to relieve himself discreetly behind his mother's car door. His arrest and subsequent sentencing to three months' probation and a two-page essay on Kobe Bryant by a



Karriem



Summers

youth court judge are a stark reminder of the disproportionate and harmful outcomes that can result from the mishandling of minor infractions by law enforcement and the judicial system.

"These incidents demand a comprehensive reevaluation of our law enforcement practices, particularly in relation to the treatment of children and the response to non-violent situations. We must prioritize de-escalation, empathy and community-oriented approaches to policing, ensuring that our officers are equipped to handle sensitive situations with compassion and restraint. Furthermore, the accountability and oversight mechanisms within our law enforcement and judicial systems must be strengthened to ensure that incidents of excessive force and unjust treatment are thoroughly investigated and addressed.

"As representatives of the people, we are committed to advocating for meaningful reforms that will safeguard the rights and well-being of all Mississippians, regardless of age, race, or background. We call upon our fellow legislators, law enforcement agencies and community leaders to join us in this crucial endeavor. Together, we must work towards a future where our children can feel safe and valued, where justice is truly blind and where the principles of fairness and compassion guide our actions. The time for change is now. Let us come together to create a more just and equitable society for all."

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Confederate memorial to be removed in coming days from Arlington National Cemetery

The Associated Press

A Confederate memorial is to be removed from Arlington National Cemetery in northern Virginia in the coming days, part of the push to remove symbols that commemorate the Confederacy from military-related facilities, a cemetery official said Saturday.

The decision ignores a recent demand from more than 40 Republican congressmen that the Pentagon suspend efforts to dismantle and remove the monument from Arlington cemetery.

Safety fencing has been installed around the memorial, and officials anticipate completing the removal by Dec. 22, the Arlington National Cemetery said in an email. During the removal, the surrounding landscape, graves and headstones will be protected, the Arlington National Cemetery said.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin disagrees with the decision and plans to move the monument to the New Market Battlefield State Historical Park in the Shenandoah Valley, Youngkin spokeswoman Macaulay Porter said.

In 2022, an independent commission recommended that the memorial be taken down, as part of its final report to Congress on renaming of military bases and assets that commemorate the Confederacy.

The statue, unveiled in 1914, features a bronze woman, crowned with olive leaves, standing on a 32-foot pedestal, and was designed to represent the American South. According to Arlington, the woman holds a laurel wreath, a plow stock and a pruning hook, with a Biblical inscription at her feet that says: “They have beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks.”

Some of the figures also on the statue include a black woman depicted as “Mammy” holding what is said to be the child of a white officer, and an enslaved man following his owner to war.

In a recent letter to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, more

than 40 House Republicans said the commission overstepped its authority when it recommended that the monument be removed. The congressmen contended that the monument “does not honor nor commemorate the Confederacy; the memorial commemorates reconciliation and national unity.”

“The Department of Defense must respect Congress’ clear legislative intentions regarding the Naming Commission’s legislative authority” the letter said.

U.S. Rep. Andrew Clyde, a Georgia Republican, has led the push to block the memorial’s removal. Clyde’s office did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment Saturday.

A process to prepare for the memorial’s removal and relocation has been completed, the cemetery said. The memorial’s bronze elements will be relocated, while the granite base and foundation will remain in place to avoid disturbing surrounding graves, it said.

Earlier this year, Fort Bragg shed its Confederate namesake to become Fort Liberty, part of the broad Department of Defense initiative, motivated by the 2020 George Floyd protests, to rename military installations that had been named after confederate soldiers.

The North Carolina base was originally named in 1918 for Gen. Braxton Bragg, a Confederate general from Warrenton, North Carolina, who was known for owning slaves and losing key Civil War battles that contributed to the Confederacy’s downfall.

The Black Lives Matter demonstrations that erupted nationwide after Floyd’s killing by a white police officer, coupled with ongoing efforts to remove Confederate monuments, turned the spotlight on the Army installations. The naming commission created by Congress visited the bases and met with members of the surrounding communities for input.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre highlights President’s commitment to black community in exclusive interview



The first black woman to serve as White House Press Secretary, Jean-Pierre, highlighted the impact of the Biden-Harris administration’s policies on economic recovery, small business revival and other measures that directly provided essential financial relief to individuals.

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

In an exclusive telephone interview, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre underscored President Biden’s unwavering commitment to addressing the black community’s critical issues.

Reflecting on promises made during the 2020 campaign, Jean-Pierre outlined key achievements and ongoing initiatives directly impacting African Americans and other historically underserved communities.

“At the onset of President Biden’s term, the country faced economic turmoil and the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The President, true to his campaign commitment, prioritized equity, ensuring the black community received fair access to COVID-19 vaccines,” remarked Jean-Pierre.

“He made sure that small businesses got back on their feet, our schools reopened, and

the child tax credit put money into people’s pockets. All those things were important to our community.”

The more than 10-minute discussion also delved into the significance of the American Rescue Plan, which was pivotal in supporting various facets of the black community.

The first black woman to serve as White House Press Secretary, Jean-Pierre, highlighted the impact of the Biden-Harris administration’s policies on economic recovery, small business revival and other measures that directly provided essential financial relief to individuals.

“Economic indicators demonstrate significant progress since President Biden took office. Black unemployment, which stood at 9.2 percent, has notably declined to 5.9 percent as of October,” said Jean-Pierre, emphasizing the administration’s commitment to economic revitalization.

Jean-Pierre also noted the importance of net worth, not-

ing a remarkable 60 percent increase for African Americans. She highlighted the historic investment of \$7 billion in historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and the doubling of black business ownership since the onset of the pandemic.

“The President has consistently prioritized equity across various policy areas, including healthcare, education and police reform,” said Jean-Pierre, also the first openly gay person to helm the White House briefing room. “Executive orders were issued to ban chokeholds and implement strong use-of-force policies when congressional action stalled,” Jean-Pierre stated.

She noted that President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have regularly worked to uplift black and brown communities, including their fight for voting rights, police reform and cutting prices at the cash register.

“Lowering prices is what the president works on every day,”

the press secretary asserted. “The prices of eggs, milk and [other items] are lower than last year. Used cars and truck prices are down, and we will do everything we can to continue to lower prices. The work continues.”

The conversation extended to Biden’s recognition of the Black Press’s significance, with Jean-Pierre assuring ongoing access to the president for regular engagement and discussions.

“The President understands the credibility and importance of the Black Press in conveying messages directly to the community. We are committed to ensuring continuous access and engagement,” affirmed Jean-Pierre. “We’re going to ensure [The Black Press] has access to the president. That’s what he wants – he wants to speak directly to you. This president understands the importance of speaking to the Black Press, and he wants to have regular engagement with all of you, and we’re going to make sure that happens.”

Biden-Harris launches the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database to advance police reform and strengthen community trust



The White House said the move is part of a broader effort to strengthen the bonds of trust and accountability within law enforcement agencies nationwide.

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior National Correspondent

In what the White House called a significant step towards enhancing police accountability and rebuilding trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris announced the establishment of the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database. The initiative marks the first-ever federal database designed to track official records of law enforcement officer misconduct.

“Every person in our nation has a right to be safe. And trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve is essential for public safety,” Harris asserted. “Police misconduct undermines that trust and threatens the right to equal justice under law.”

The database aims to provide federal agencies with readily accessible records of serious mis-

conduct when hiring federal law enforcement officers. The White House said the move is part of a broader effort to strengthen the bonds of trust and accountability within law enforcement agencies nationwide.

“Protecting public safety depends on trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve,” Biden remarked. “By building trust, we can strengthen public safety and more effectively fight crime in our communities.”

The initiative is an outgrowth of the Executive Order Biden signed in May 2022, focusing on police reform – the most significant in decades. The order mandated federal law enforcement agencies to ban chokeholds, strengthen use-of-force policies, and restrict no-knock warrants, among other critical reforms.

“As part of my administration’s executive order on policing, we committed to create a first-of-its-

kind database to track records of law enforcement misconduct so that agencies are able to hire the best personnel,” Biden affirmed. “I am fulfilling that promise by launching the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database.”

The president and vice president stressed their dedication to advancing police accountability, renewing their call for Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. Harris, pivotal in authoring the act as a United States Senator, reiterated the administration’s commitment to fostering nationwide transparency and public trust in law enforcement.

Biden also urged Congress to act swiftly. “I urge Congress to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act to advance accountability, transparency and public trust in law enforcement across the nation,” Biden insisted. “Send it to my desk, and I will sign it.”

Keeping high blood pressure at bay for the holidays

ByMichael Merschel
AHA News

No matter what winter holiday traditions you celebrate, you probably won't find "think about blood pressure" on your to-do list, even after checking it twice.

But that would be a nice idea for your heart's sake, experts say.

High blood pressure is a leading risk factor for heart attack and stroke, said Dr. Angela L. Brown, director of the hypertension clinic at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Studies have shown that cardiovascular problems rise after Thanksgiving and peak in the new year.

People often put their health on the back burner this time of year, Brown said. But they shouldn't. "The holiday season is a time for enjoyment," she said. "You want to enter the holidays healthy, and you want to leave the holiday season healthy."

With that goal in mind, here's advice on keeping your blood pressure under control during the holidays.

Think before you feast
"All of us enjoy a good party," Brown said. "But if you have high blood pressure in particular, you have to be conscious about what you're eating." So if you're stepping out, consider having a healthy meal at home first, she said, so



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you're less likely to overdo it. Similarly, Dr. Karen Griffin, a nephrologist at Loyola Medicine in Maywood, Illinois, suggested scouting before snacking at a family gathering.

"Do a little bit of groundwork, and look around the room and see what's on that buffet Aunt Sally prepared," said Griffin, who also works at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital in Hines, Illinois.

A vegetable tray, she said, can be a good place to fill up on something healthy. But

watch the dip and use just a bit. "A lot of people think, 'Well, if I'm eating vegetables, I'm in the clear.' But they load it up so there's more dip than vegetables."

When you sit down for the big meal, go ahead and eat your fill, Griffin said. You don't want to walk away hungry, then overdo it on the desserts that are overabundant this time of year.

The sodium outside is frightful

Limiting sodium is challenging this time of year, Grif-

fin said, and always important.

Excess sodium in your bloodstream pulls water inside your blood vessels, increasing blood pressure. Table salt is one source, but most sodium in the typical American diet comes from processed foods.

That means watching out for anything that's been canned, preserved or packaged, Griffin said. "A lot of the hams that will be circulating are probably pretty high in sodium as well."

Federal dietary guidelines recommend that adults con-

sume less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium a day. The American Heart Association suggests an ideal limit of 1,500 milligrams a day for most adults.

"If you're cooking, one thing that you can do is just leave the majority of the salts to be added at the table," Griffin said, so guests who monitor their sodium can enjoy the meal with other people but add salt at their discretion.

And here's good news for people trying to adapt to a lower-sodium diet. The less salt you use, the better your body becomes at tasting it, she said. After a few weeks, you won't need as much to get the same flavor.

Watch that cup of cheer

Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure. While federal dietary guidelines allow for moderate drinking (two drinks or less in a day for men, and one or less for women), Griffin suggests paying attention to what's in your holiday cocktail as well.

For example, margaritas are served in salt-rimmed glasses. "Stay away from those," Griffin said.

Be careful taking these medications ...

During cold season, people reach for over-the-counter medicines. But decongestants can raise blood pressure. Check the packaging for warnings, Griffin said, or ask your

doctor.

The holidays can disrupt routines. If you take medicine to control high blood pressure, you might need extra reminders.

Tracking apps can help, Brown said. But Griffin said it can be as simple as carrying a pill organizer and setting an alarm.

Have funukah

"As much fun as the holidays bring, they also bring stress for people," Brown said. Stress-related hormones have been linked to increased risk for high blood pressure. Stress also can contribute to depression, Brown said, which also has been associated with high blood pressure.

"I think it's important to set limits and to remember to take time for yourself," Brown said. But, she warned, don't respond by overeating or overindulging in alcohol, "because that really just compounds the problem."

Exercise can help with stress, Brown said, so try finding time to take walks, do yoga – or to just sit and relax. Griffin said that to cope with stress, "I just take one day at a time, and sometimes one hour at a time. And just live in the present."

After all, she said, the holidays are supposed to be fun. "Remember how it was when you were a kid? That's how it should be."

RSV can impact adults too. Here's what to know

StatePoint

Each year, it's estimated that more than 160,000 U.S. adults are hospitalized and 10,000 of them die due to Respiratory Syncytial Virus, or RSV, a common respiratory virus. While most people only develop mild symptoms similar to that of a common cold, RSV can be dangerous for certain people at high risk, including some adults.

The American Lung Association's campaign to educate people living in the United States about RSV in adults is supported in part by a grant from GSK. As part of the campaign, they are sharing patient insights, along with information about the risk of severe complications from RSV, and steps people can take to help protect themselves.

Risk Factors
Adults 65 years and older are at higher risk of RSV that can be severe and even life threatening. Also at high risk are adults with chronic heart or lung disease, and adults with weakened immune systems. RSV in some cases may worsen asthma or COPD symptoms, lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis, or even result in congestive heart failure. Adults at high risk need to be especially vigilant during RSV season, which is occurring in the United States right now.
Michele D.'s childhood memories of medical visits and treatments for her asthma helped shape her path in life, inspiring her to become a Registered Respiratory Therapist so that she could care for and

educate others also living with asthma or other lung diseases. Even with Michele's extensive knowledge of respiratory diseases and her lived experience of growing up with asthma, her severe bout of RSV in December 2022, which hospitalized her and lead to pneumonia, took her by surprise.

"I'm a respiratory therapist, and I know RSV can be serious, but I wasn't expecting it to impact me the way that it did and for as long as it did," says Michele. "I don't think most people living with chronic lung disease realize how an RSV infection can impact their lives. I didn't."

Prevention
Fortunately, there are steps you can take to lower your risk of severe RSV:

- Keep up to date on all recommended vaccinations. In June 2023, the CDC recommended RSV vaccination for adults 60 and older who have discussed with their healthcare provider whether it's right for them.
- If you live with a chronic lung disease, such as asthma or COPD, work with your healthcare team to keep the condition under control so your lungs can better heal from infectious respiratory diseases.
- When possible, stay away from individuals who are sick with respiratory infections to reduce your chance of becoming ill.
- Wash your hands often and try not to touch your face with unwashed hands as that is a common route for infections to occur.

Vaccines, not just for kids

By Vince Faust
Tips to Be Fit

A lot of adults believe that other than the occasional flu vaccine is strictly kid stuff. That type of attitude could cost you or even kill you. Most vaccines are safe and they can help keep you from getting serious or life-threatening diseases.

Each year in the United States thousands of adults die from vaccine preventable diseases or their complications, according to the National Coalition for Adult Immunization (NCAI) a network of more than 130 organizations that includes professional associations, advocacy groups, vaccine manufacturers and government health agencies.

As you age you may need to get more vaccines as an older adult. This is because older adults are more likely to get age related diseases.

Older adults are also at a higher risk for serious complications from diseases. You have to remember your protection from some vaccines can wear off over time.

When you get a vaccine, you don't just protect yourself you also protect your family and many others in your community. This is especially important if you spend time around anyone with a long-term health problem or a weakened immune system (the system in the body that fights infections).

There can be side affects to vaccines. The most common side effects for most vaccines are mild and can include pain,

swelling or redness where the vaccine was given. Before you get any vaccine, you should talk with your doctor or pharmacist about your health history, including past illnesses, treatments and any allergies. A health care provider should address any concerns you have.

Check with your doctor, pharmacist or your local health department about vaccines you need if you're planning to travel to another country. The vaccines that are required and recommended are based on your destination, planned activities and medical history. Sometimes you'll need multiple vaccines or doses. It's best to get those vaccines at least four to six weeks before you travel to allow time to build up your immunity and get your best protection.

Your travel vaccines can be expensive. You should contact Medicare or your private health insurance plan to find out whether they cover the travel vaccines you need. You can check to see if you are able to get some of your travel vaccines from a local health care provider. Others are available from the health departments and travel medicine clinics. For more information, visit the CDC Traveler's Health website or call its information line at 800-232-4636.

The following are recommended vaccines for adults over 65:

Flu (influenza): A virus that can cause fever, chills, sore

throat, stuffy nose, headache and muscle aches. Flu is very serious when it gets in your lungs. Older adults are at a higher risk for developing serious complications from the flu, such as pneumonia.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV): A common virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Older adults have a higher risk of developing severe symptoms if they are infected with RSV. This illness can be particularly dangerous for people who have chronic diseases or a weakened immune system. Older adults who get very sick from an RSV infection may need to be hospitalized, and the illness can even be life-threatening.

Tetanus (sometimes called lockjaw): A disease caused by bacteria found in soil, dust and manure. It often enters your body through a deep cut or burn. It can lead to death.

Diphtheria: A serious illness that can affect the tonsils, throat, nose or skin. It can spread from person to person. It can lead to death.

Pertussis (whooping cough): This disease causes uncontrollable, violent coughing fits that make it hard to breathe. It can spread from person to person. It can lead to death.

Shingles: A disease caused by the same virus as chickenpox. If you had chickenpox, the virus is still in your body. As you get older, the virus can become active again and cause shingles. Shingles affects the nerves. Common symptoms include burning,

shooting pain, tingling and itching and a rash with fluid-filled blisters. Even when the rash disappears, the pain can remain. This is called post-herpetic neuralgia, or PHN.

COVID-19: It's still here. This is a respiratory disease that causes symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath. Older adults are more likely than younger people to get very sick from COVID-19. The disease can lead to serious illness and death.

You may need other vaccines if you:

Have a long-term health condition like diabetes or heart, lung or liver disease

Didn't get all your vaccines when you were a child

Have a health condition that makes it harder for your body to fight off infections, like HIV or problems with your spleen

Are a man who has sex with men

Smoke

Drink heavily or have alcohol use disorder

Spend time with infants or young children

Travel outside the United States

And you may need other vaccines if you work in a hospital or clinic, nursing home, prison, school or daycare center.

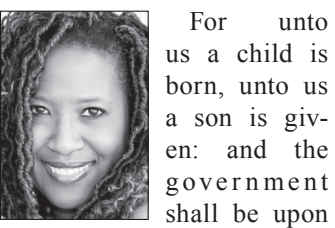
You should keep your own vaccination record, listing the types and dates of your shots, along with any side effects or problems.

Before starting any health or fitness program consult your physician.

P R E S E R V E D

The gift of a better me

By Shewanda Riley
Columnist



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6

In addition to thinking of what you want to buy loved ones and friends for Christmas, some of you may be spending this time of the year thinking about your life this past year...with a tinge of regret. Or you may be thinking about how you became healthier emotionally, spiritually and physically this year.

I'd like to share three questions that I believe led to the gift of a better me and most importantly, improved my relationship with God this past year: "Who am I?" "What do

I want?" and "Where have I been?"

1. Who am I? – More than the others, this forced me to be honest about who I was spiritually, relationally, emotionally, physically and professionally. Regardless of my achievements or failures, I was reminded that who I thought I was always had to be asked in relation to what God said about me. Psalm 139:14 backs this up when it says, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

2. What do I want? – I think the phrase that I uttered the most this past year was "I want things to be different." I had to make sure that the changes were made gradually (which allowed me to learn patience). This could have meant something as insignificant as different clothes or trying out different food. In other words, find what fits you best. Find the right atti-

tude and perspective that fits you. Just because everyone around you is complaining doesn't mean you have to do so. Psalm 37:4 encourages us to "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart."

3. Where have I been? – This proved to be a tough one. There was always the temptation to leave out key details of those places (good and bad) in order to make my current situation seem better. But the fruit of poor decisions always gives the story away. Thankfully, God's grace and mercy still covered me. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

What does all of this have to do with Christmas? As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, rather than spending money on things you don't really need, give yourself a

gift that truly keeps on giving. Start by asking yourself those three questions. A guest minister at a church I attended years ago said that It's because of God's great love for us that we should love ourselves enough to give the best gift we can give anybody: a healthier emotional state, renewed mind and restored relationship with God. In other words, the gift of a better me.

Have a Merry Christmas. May the joy of the Christmas season bring you overwhelming joy, peace and comfort!

Shewanda Riley (Aunt Wanda), PhD, is a Fort Worth-based author of "Love Hangover: Moving from Pain to Purpose After a Relationship Ends" and "Writing to the Beat of God's Heart: A Book of Prayers for Writers." Email her at preservedbypurpose@gmail.com or follow her on Twitter @shewanda. You can also listen to her podcast at www.chocolateauntiepodcast.com.

P A R T 2

A world's cry, love one another

By Pastor Simeon R. Green III
Special to The Mississippi Link



Some may argue, "But love is a feeling, and you cannot command a feeling. I just do not feel anything for him/her anymore." But agape love is not primarily a feeling. God would not command a feeling. Love is primarily an action. Love is the giving of oneself to another. It is a skill one can develop in the strength of God's spirit.

"Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthews 5:44). In other words, love insists we do something. Feelings for enemies are not developed by sitting in a dark room thinking, but by doing. Feelings follow action. Feelings are the fruit, not the root, of love.

If you give your enemy something to eat or drink, something happens to your feelings. When you invest yourself in someone, you begin to feel differently toward him or her. What our world needs most is to see love in action – in our homes, in our

churches, in our cities and in our streets. How can this happen? The solution is found in God's Word: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

"I want to be loved – and I want to love" God hears these cries, and He wants to love this world through us by His Spirit. But remember, love demands actions, and we must take those first steps. We must put ourselves in situations where God can love through us.

The world today is reeling from disillusionment. Hordes of people are seeking answers – but precious few are finding them. The world has no answers that satisfy or even make sense to people facing the kinds of tragedies we see all around us. The good news is that we who know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, need not remain in hopelessness and despair. There is an answer, and His name is Jesus.

Do you want to give hope to those around you? There is only one certain way and one sure source: Give them Jesus.

Simeon R. Green, III, First Church of God 6517 Walmsley Blvd. Richmond, Virginia 23224.

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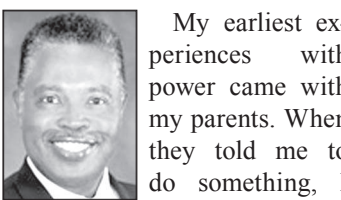
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When power corrupts, it corrupts absolutely. Ask former mayor Rudy Giuliani

By James B. Ewers Jr., Ed.D.
President Emeritus
Teen Mentoring Committee of Ohio



My earliest experiences with power came with my parents. When they told me to do something, I just did it. I didn't ask any questions because they loved me and knew more than I did.

They used their "love power" to provide me with the tenets for successful living. While they are no longer with me, I thank them every day. The foundation they laid for me has guided me through good times and challenging times.

They used that "love power" to build me up and to encourage me. They used it to motivate and inspire me. I was surrounded by a constant glow of hope and understanding. I have been fortunate to be around people over the course of my life who had power and used it wisely. I watched them and when it was my turn, I believe that I, too, used it wisely. Unfortunately, I have also seen people use power to their detriment and to the detriment of others. Their modus operandi was always to use their power to threaten and to intimidate. They wanted you to fear them and to be afraid. The good news is they didn't

last long. They faded from the scene much like the wind. They were full of bluster and their talk became cheap. Over the past several months, America has watched former president Donald Trump become embroiled in the legal system. Trump, in his dishonesty, has made others lose their moral integrity as well. One of them is Rudy Giuliani. Giuliani became an election peddler of lies. He insisted that Donald Trump won the 2020 presidential election. The die was cast as he appeared in various venues spewing out untruths. One of his targets was the election results in the state of

Georgia. The former mayor of the Big Apple seemingly put some of the blame on two election workers for Trump's loss. The election workers, Ruby Freeman and her daughter, Wandrea Moss, were simply doing their jobs which was to ensure there was a fair election. Both Freeman and Moss are African Americans. Why should their race matter? It did matter to Giuliani as he used race as a factor in his unfair and unprofessional description of them and their actions. Sadly, but factually, Giuliani swallowed all the bad hemlock Trump was selling. Both women sued him for defamation and for ruining their

reputations. I suspect Giuliani thought he could get away with impugning a person's character and nothing would happen. Last week in a federal court in Washington, DC, the jury found that Giuliani was guilty. The court awarded Freeman and Moss \$148 million. The amount is for emotional stress and for the former mayor's conduct and behavior. Giuliani should know by now that he is not above the law. It is my opinion that he has become a pathetic soul. The skeleton of Rudy Giuliani is crumbling and corroding before our very eyes. He has lost whatever political standing he had in the political world.

Ken Frydman, once a campaign staffer for him, said, "Rudy Giuliani was seduced by Trump and a combination of variables that led to his downfall." It will be interesting to see if Freeman and Moss receive any money from this trial. Freeman said, "Money will never solve all my problems. I can never move back into my house that I call home. I will always have to be careful where I go and who I choose to share my name with." Let us hope that both find a path to go forward and to once again lead productive lives. In the meantime, Rudy Giuliani has a dim and dismal future awaiting him.

Union momentum is strong heading into 2024

By Lee Saunders
President, AFSCME



When working people stand together, raise their voice and show their power, they win. That's the lesson of 2023, a year in which workers boldly asserted their rights and refused to accept less than their fair share of the value they create. Through October, nearly 500,000 workers had taken the courageous step of going on strike this year, three times the number that did during the first 10 months of 2022. And almost 900,000 union workers have won pay hikes of at least 10% over the last year. AFSCME affiliates across the country have been a part of this wave of strike activity. From workers in Yamhill County, Oregon, to employees in the Morgan County, Ohio, school district, AFSCME members withheld their labor until their employer afforded them the respect they deserve. This is happening across the economy – from health care to hospitality. Writers, actors and other workers in the entertainment industry hung together for months until they finally got a better deal from their employers. Sometimes, just the threat of a strike forces management to soften and cede to workers' demands. That's what happened in the

standoff between the city of San Jose, California and the Municipal Employees' Federation–AFSCME Local 101 this summer. Similarly, the Teamsters were prepared to walk off the job at UPS but ultimately didn't have to, using the leverage of a 97% strike authorization vote to land a historic contract. Perhaps the year's highest-profile worker action came from the United Auto Workers. In an unprecedented gambit, the union went on strike against all of the Big Three automakers – Ford, General Motors and Stellantis – at the same time. UAW now has contracts with all three companies that include life-changing raises of up to 160%, as well as greater retirement security and union protections for those working on electric vehicles. When workers are able to organize, bargain collectively and go on strike when necessary, the benefits are felt especially in communities of color. Unionization has been an economic lifeline for generations of black people, in the public as well as the private sector. My father was a bus driver in the city of Cleveland, and while we sure weren't rich when I was growing up, his union wages and benefits meant that we could have a decent life. Unions are a force for racial equity. While there are still major pay and wealth gaps between black and white workers, they would be much larger if

not for unions. And in 2022, median earnings for black union members were more than 20% higher than for black workers who don't belong to a union. No wonder African Americans are more likely to be union members and more likely to support unions than the population at large. So, as we look at strategies for growing the labor movement, organizing black workers must be a top priority. Workers of all races are feeling empowered and emboldened, claiming their seat at the table and inspired to take collective action. And strong public support is the wind at our back. Recent polling demonstrates that unions enjoy sky-high approval ratings, particularly among young people. Growing numbers of people want unions to be stronger and believe they are good for the economy. As we close out 2023 and look ahead to a new year, the challenge for those of us in the labor movement is to build on this momentum. We must continue standing up to the boss and organizing new workers. We must continue bargaining good contracts and electing pro-worker allies. We must continue, every day, to talk about and demonstrate the power of the union difference. Lee Saunders is president, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

A Christmas message

By Dr. John Warren
Publisher, San Diego Voice & Viewpoint Newspaper



This country, and most of our lives, were founded upon Christian principles that are at the very essence of this season. The fact that those of different faiths are allowed to exercise their religious beliefs does not negate that which many of us profess. Neither do we require others to acknowledge or share in our beliefs. This is the beauty of the Freedom of Religion Clause in our Constitution. But the differences in faith does not stop the Spirit of Christmas and here is the reason why. The Gospel of John, recorded in the Bible at 3:16, states that: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The operative word is "gave." It is the gift of Jesus that is responsible for the desire we all have to "give" gifts. It is because that with the gift of Jesus to mankind came the Spirit of giving which is released each time we celebrate His birth. The angel of the Lord that appeared to the shepherds that night over Bethlehem made a pronouncement that we still feel each Christmas. The angel said: "Glory

to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." Consider that Christmas is the only time in the year that just about everything shuts down; it is the one time of the year that we see an outpouring of kindness not seen at any other time. That kindness is the "good will" toward men that the angel spoke of. It was that which the angels spoke of that caused what is called the Christmas Truce of December 24, 1914. It occurred when soldiers in the muddy trenches on the Western Front of World War I put down their weapons on both sides, stepped out of trenches, met each other face to face and sang Christmas songs because both sides missed being away from their families. In some areas the truce persisted until after New Year's Day. That same Spirit of Peace continues to settle on each Christmas season as God honors our recognition of the birth of his Son. There are still so many without food or shelter, especially this Christmas season with two major wars underway and a people by the thousands seeking shelter and refuge in our land. Those without the basic necessities and comforts so many of us have are knocking at our doors and so many of us are responding in every way possible. This is a time for us to be thankful for what we do have as opposed to complaining about what we

want or don't have. To many, the stable at Bethlehem would be a welcomed shelter as compared to the streets on which they sleep. For many of our families there are personal problems, an empty chair at a table because of a missing loved one, but we are still blessed and should find comfort in helping others through this dark time in their lives. While many of us do not have the shelter, food or comforts that so many others have, yet we are blessed with health or family or the meeting of our basic needs, if not our wants. Our families might have their personal problems, or many of us have an empty chair at the table this season due to the pandemic or other tragedies, yet we are still blessed. Let us remember those who lost so much during the recent storms. Let us seek ways to be of help to others and by doing so help ourselves. We give thanks for those among us seeking to help and feed and shelter so many others. Let us commit to seeking what each of us can do to make a difference in the lives of others and by doing so participate in the gift that keeps on giving. May God bless and keep you, regardless of your circumstances. Let us offer up prayers of praise and thanksgiving and sing glory to God in the Highest as well as peace on earth and good will toward all men.

Please come home for Christmas

By LaShunda Calvert, Ph.D.
Tips for a Good Marriage



As you know, I absolutely love Christmas. In fact, that's why I chose to get married in December (2005). (I am excited about our upcoming anniversary). I shared my wedding vision with my mother, who loves decorating for every and any occasion. Let me just emphasize, my mother made sure that I had my dream Christmas themed wedding. Our wedding party consisted of at least fifty participants and a church full of folk ready to witness two young people become one until death do us part. Our wedding day was special – it was a day that I will never forget. In fact, each time I reflect on our wedding day, especially during this season, I can't help but smile. Furthermore, my love for Christmas is also embedded in the sounds of Christmas: Christmas carols and songs. I love listening to Christmas music. Some of my favorite Christmas songs include classics like Nat King Cole's, "The Christmas Song," Bing Crosby's, "It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas," and one of my favorites, Charles Brown's version of "Please Come Home for Christmas," and so many more. "Please Come Home for Christmas," is not just a song to listen to for entertainment, it is a message, a hope and a prayer for many spouses. It breaks my heart knowing that many homes are broken due to spouse abandonment – prodigal spouses. Prodigal spouses are spouses who abandon (move out/desert) their spouses to pursue a life with no regard for their families. Prodigal spouses can become prodigal for many reasons. Some of these reasons include infidelity (pursuing a non-covenant relationship – a relationship that was not ordained by God/marriage vows), addictions, financial pursuits, etc. Whatever the reason for the Prodigal's departure, wives, husbands and children are lonely, hurting, experiencing unbearable pain, excruciating agony, anguish and turmoil because Papa Bear or Mama Bear is gone. Yes, of course, every spouse, especially those in miserable and unhappy marriages, don't feel upset – some are relieved that their spouses have gone. They only regret that their spouse didn't leave sooner (Hello). However, imagine being married to your soulmate, a happy marriage at least on most days – when he or she wakes up one day and expresses they no longer desire to be married to you and want to leave you for whoever or

whatever (Hello again!), and then they leave; this is reality for many. Unfortunately, some spouses don't receive any type of warning – they discover a brief note or a confusing text, a nonchalant voicemail, short and even detailed email, or no explanation at all. Moreover, in some instances, some spouses never hear from their spouses again, some hear often or seldom from their spouses, and some experience their prodigals returning and leaving again. Therefore, the left behind spouses is often forced to contemplate the following: wait for their spouse to return home, pursue a new relationship (non-covenant), file for a divorce, while others unfortunately take extreme measures (this is not a solution – only make matters worse). In conclusion, I can't tell any spouse what to do in these situations but since you asked me nicely; I do have several suggestions for those fighting for their prodigal spouse and their marriage: • There is nothing impossible for God to do – He restored/is restoring our marriage • Seek God's guidance on what you should do • Fight by praying for your spouses – pray that your spouses first give their hearts to God – a Godly heart will not want to continue pursuing darkness. Some encourages one to pray that God remove the thing or person out of their spouse's life that helped caused the spouse to leave but that doesn't solve anything because a new thing or new person can pop up at any time and sway them again. Pray that for spouse to surrender their all to God. • Tune out all the negative – seek Godly counsel/professional marriage counseling • Trust God that He knows what is best for you • Focus on Romans 8:28 If you happen to be a prodigal spouse reading this article– your husband/wife and/or children are hurting. Their hearts have been ripped out and nothing but God can put their hearts back together. They have been praying for you non-stop and want you to come home now, today. Please go home and seek God and professional help for you and your marriage – return home and never leave again. Please come home for Christmas. Contact Dr. LaShunda Calvert for speaking engagements (motivational, ministering, marriage counseling, marriage workshops, marriage seminars, marriage conferences, etc.) Marriage Ministry: The Restoration Church, Suite H, Jackson, MS. 39206, Instagram: letsstay2gether4ever (Dr. LaShunda Calvert) Facebook Dr. LaShunda Calvert Email:letsstaytogether4eva@gmail.com or call 601-874-6176.

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The challenge is to fill every row across, every column down, and every 3x3 box with the digits 1 through 9. Each 1 through 9 digit must appear only once in each row across, each column down, and each 3x3 box.

7	4			9				
				5	8	1		
					1	2		
8	7				4			
	9		1					
5		2						
					2		9	8
	6	4		7		5		
				3			6	

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Sudoku Solution

7	4	1	2	9	6	3	8	5
2	3	9	7	5	8	1	4	6
6	8	5	3	4	1	2	7	9
8	7	3	5	6	4	9	1	2
4	9	6	1	2	3	8	5	7
5	1	2	9	8	7	6	3	4
3	5	7	6	1	2	4	9	8
1	6	4	8	7	9	5	2	3
9	2	8	4	3	5	7	6	1

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Mississippi local officials say human error and poor training led to election-day chaos

By Michael Goldberg
Associated Press/Report for America

Commissioner Kidada Brown spoke during special meeting of the Hinds County Election Commission, Monday Dec. 18, 2023

The county election officials under whose watch ballot shortages hampered voting in Mississippi's largest county said technical mishaps and insufficient training were to blame for election day chaos in November.

At a meeting with representatives from a coalition of statewide and national civil rights organizations, Hinds County election commissioners said Monday that their mishaps caused several polling locations in Hinds County to run out of ballots. They admitted to sharing the wrong voter data with the company they contracted to print ballots, which directly led to the ballot shortages.

"Complete human error. I hate that the citizens of Hinds County had to experience that," said Commissioner Ratoya Gilmer McGee.

But the commissioners, all Democrats, also pointed to what they said was inadequate guidance from Secretary of State Michael Watson, a Republican. The commissioners



Derrick Johnson, NAACP National president, said, "Voting is the tool to ensure one's voice is heard in this democracy."

said they had to rely on a training manual written for election officials across the state.

"If there are 82 counties in the state of Mississippi, there

are 82 ways to do things. And so there is no streamlining, there are no checks and balances, there are no policies and procedures," Gilmer Mc-

Gee said.

In Mississippi's Nov. 7 general election, up to nine voting precincts in Hinds County ran out of ballots. People waited

up to two hours to vote as election officials made frantic trips to office supply stores so they could print ballots and deliver them to polling places. Voting groups and political parties filed legal papers that aimed to keep polls open later or prevent them from staying open.

Hinds County is majority black and a Democratic stronghold. It's unclear how many people left without voting and the political affiliations of the most affected voters.

When Hinds County resident Monica Taylor got to the polls, someone told her there were no ballots. She asked when there would be ballots, but nobody knew.

"My grandfather is in the civil rights museum. This is what he fought for. So I'm not a person you can tell 'we don't have any ballots' and think I'm going to walk away," Taylor said at a public meeting last week. "I'm not going to walk away."

With the 2024 election less than a year away, the situation in Hinds County has drawn

the attention of the congressional committee with direct oversight over federal elections and civil rights leaders.

Derrick Johnson, the national president of the NAACP who attended college in Jackson, said he hoped the episode wouldn't depress voter turnout in future elections.

"Voting is the tool to ensure one's voice is heard in this country. It is our currency in this democracy," Johnson said in an interview. "You don't quit, you continue to move forward to make sure this democracy works."

The commissioners said they didn't receive enough specific guidance on how to print the right number of ballots for the populous county's "split precincts," polling locations where voters use different ballots based on their residential address.

In a statement after the meeting, Secretary of State Michael Watson said his office was open to providing more training, but that Hinds County was unique in its election management troubles.

"We are always happy to answer questions and will gladly spend time training those who need additional help. Heading into the 2023 election, all 82 counties received the same

training and resources from our office," Watson told The Associated Press. "No other county experienced the issues we saw in Hinds County."

The five-member Commission agreed to Monday's meeting after the civil rights coalition said they had failed to provide enough information about what went wrong on election day.

After the meeting, Leah Wong, an attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said she hoped the Commission would agree to future meetings ahead of the 2024 election.

"Clearly, there are a lot more things to troubleshoot to be better for 2024. We are looking forward to working with them," Wong said.

Harya Tarekegn, policy director for the non-profit legal group Mississippi Center for Justice, said Hinds County could have smoother elections with the right policy changes.

"That's what people fought for during the Civil Rights Movement, that's what people continue to fight for," Tarekegn said. "Our ancestors fought for it, we continue to fight for it, and there will be a day when Mississippi runs the best elections; when Hinds County runs the best elections."

Giuliani found liable in defamation trial, Jury awards \$148.17 Million to plaintiffs

Congressman Thompson: Damages awarded to Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss show those who tried to overturn the 2020 elections will be held accountable for their lies

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Senior
National Correspondent

A federal jury found Rudy Giuliani liable in the civil defamation case that election workers Ruby Freeman and her daughter Wandrea "Shaye" Moss brought. The trial, presided over by U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell, centered around false claims Giuliani made about the two Georgia women in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election.

After four days of trial testimony, jurors deliberated, ultimately awarding Freeman and Moss \$148.17 million in damages. The plaintiffs had initially sought at least \$24 million each for Giuliani's defamatory statements accusing them of election fraud.

Howell had previously ruled that Giuliani's remarks were defamatory, setting the stage for the trial. Despite earlier indications that he would testify, Giuliani reversed course, opting not to take the stand. He



Rudy Giuliani was found liable in civil defamation case that election workers Ruby Freeman and 'Shaye' Moss brought.

had previously claimed that his testimony would "definitively clear" any doubts about the truthfulness of his statements.

In a written statement following the verdict, Giuliani referred to the awarded amount as an "absurdity" and expressed his intention to appeal the judgment. "The absurdity

of the amount is indicative of the absurdity and unfairness of the entire proceeding," Giuliani stated. "I wasn't able to offer any evidence in my defense. We'll have more to say and look forward to the appeal."

Outside the courtroom, Freeman and Moss expressed gratitude for the jury's decision,



Congressman Thompson said in a press release that a Federal jury in DC sent a clear message to all those who attempted to overturn the 2020 election.

emphasizing the profound impact of Giuliani's false claims on their lives. Moss highlighted the far-reaching consequences, stating that the lies "changed every aspect of our lives, our homes, our family, our work, our sense of safety, our mental health."

"Our greatest wish is that no election worker ever experi-

ences anything like what we went through," Moss added.

Freeman echoed this sentiment, calling for accountability beyond Giuliani. She suggested that others who had spread false information about them should also be held responsible. "Today is not the end of the road," Freeman stated. "We still have work to do. Rudy Giuliani was not the only one who spread lies about us, and others must be held accountable, too."

The jury's award to Freeman and Moss was broken down into three categories. Both plaintiffs received a total of \$20 million each for emotional distress and a combined \$75 million in punitive damages. Freeman was awarded \$16,171,000 for defamation claims, while Moss received \$16,998,000.

In a press release, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), former chairman of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on

the United States Capitol, released the following statement on the damages awarded to election workers, Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss:

"With the damages awarded Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss, a Federal jury in DC sent a clear message to all those who attempted to overturn the 2020 Presidential election: there will be accountability for their lies."

At the January 6th Select Committee hearing that featured her testimony last year, Lady Ruby expressed concern that her name had been taken from her by political charlatans. Now, her name and Shaye's will be linked forever with the courage and dignity of honorable public service.

"I remain proud of the Select Committee's work—once again reaffirmed by the justice system—that told Ruby's and Shaye's story and began to right the vicious wrongs inflicted on them by the ex-president and his henchmen."



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JPS honors the best of the best 2023 Excellence Awards Celebration

The JPS Newswire

On Monday, December 11, Jackson Public Schools recognized the excellence of leaders throughout the district. JPS Superintendent Dr. Errick L. Greene honored five outstanding individuals for their contributions which uplifted commitments to scholars, families and employees of the district.

Each recipient received a check for \$500 along with a plaque. The Jackson Public Schools' Best of the Year Awards honorees for 2023 are:

- Administrator of the Year – Dr. Sara Harper, principal, McWillie Elementary
- Teacher of the Year – Alesia White, Van Winkle Elementary School
- Parent of the Year – Celestial Gordon-Griffin, John Hopkins Elementary
- District Leader of the Year – Wanda Clark, Office of Teaching and Learning
- Support Staff of the Year – Ella Pepper, Facilities and Operations

About the Honorees

Administrator of the Year
Born in Sioux City, Iowa, Sara Harper relocated to Jackson, Mississippi in 1996. Following her graduation from Millsaps College in 2000, she embarked on her teaching career in the Jackson Public School District, where she has dedicated 24 years of service. Harper earned her master's degree in counseling from Jackson State University and later achieved her Doctor of Education Leadership from Mississippi College.

For the past 11 years, she has served as the principal of McWillie Elementary and additionally acts as a principal mentor for the Division I Elementary Team. Harper holds a significant role on the Mississippi Department of Education Principal Advisory Council. Throughout her tenure in the Jackson Public School District, she earned the distinction of Teacher of the Year at both Lee Elementary, where she served as an exceptional education teacher, and McWillie Elementary, where she taught in the Montessori program.

In 2016, Harper successfully completed the Leadership Greater Jackson program and has since remained an active board member. She is not only a graduate but also a board member of the Millsaps College Principals' Summer Institute. Committed to community service, Harper has been a member of the Junior League of Jackson since 2018 and cur-



JPS Superintendent Dr. Errick L. Greene (center) presented awards to the 2023 JPS Best of the Year honorees (from left) Dr. Sara Harper, Administrator of the Year; Alesia White, Teacher of the Year; Dr. Wanda Clark, District Leader of the Year; Ella Pepper, Support Staff of the Year; and Celestial Gordon-Griffin, Parent of the Year.

rently serves on the board for The First Tee of Central Mississippi.

Teacher of the Year

Alesia White, with 11 years of teaching experience, imparts knowledge to pre-kindergarten students at Van Winkle Elementary and holds pivotal roles as Student and Family Engagement coordinator, team leader and mentor for novice teachers at her school. She began her career at the Center for Child Development at the University of Southern Mississippi.

White holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Jackson State University and a bachelor's degree in Child and Family Studies. She is actively pursuing National Board Certification in Early Childhood.

White's educational philosophy centers on fostering scholars' growth through developmentally appropriate experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. She believes in the unique potential of each child, emphasizing positive relationships with both students and their families. Viewing children as active learners, White encourages meaningful play in her classroom, promoting curiosity, discovery and problem-solving. Her goal is to continue playing a pivotal role in the lives of young scholars, nurturing their success and development in her classroom.

Beyond the classroom, White is a dedicated church volunteer, particularly involved in various roles in support of children. She extends her commitment by volunteering with the Parent Academy Program, offering free materials to parents

of three- to five-year-olds for home-based readiness practices. She also secures essential resources through mini grants with a track record of 15 funded grants. Her additional noteworthy achievements include contributing to the establishment of Jackson Public Schools' first all-pre-kindergarten school, receiving the Rock Star Award for 2021-2022 and 2023-2024, and being honored with the 2023 Ask for More Jackson Outstanding Educator Award.

Parent of the Year

Celestial Gordon-Griffin is the daughter of Bishop L. B. and the Late Peggy Gordon. She is married to Arlyn Griffin, and together they have a blended family of four (Ariel Hunt, Taj Sanders, Aniyah Griffin and Arlyn Devon Griffin). A native of Jackson, Gordon-Griffin is a product of Jackson Public Schools. She's a graduate of Callaway High School and Tougaloo College, and she is currently pursuing a master's degree in political science at Tougaloo. Currently, she serves as the program director for the Bennie G. Thompson Delta Leadership Program at Tougaloo College.

An advocate for teachers and education, Gordon-Griffin has always been active in the role as a support parent to the schools in which her children attended. She works tirelessly in her community – from teaching and advocating for homeownership for black and brown individuals, to holding voter registration drives and inspiring the next generation of voters.

In 2005, Gordon-Griffin co-founded Tools of Hope, a

non-profit that was started to help Hurricane Katrina victims that relocated to Jackson. Understanding the financial constraints that parents of Hurricane Katrina students were facing, she knew the importance of making the transition to Jackson as smooth as possible. So, she raised funds and had over 500 uniforms donated to JPS for the students who were victims of Hurricane Katrina. Now Tools of Hope focuses on the Warming Hearts Blanket initiative and Peggy's Toy Chest.

Warming Hearts blesses homeless individuals during the Christmas season with a blanket and a care package to let them know that they are seen and loved. Peggy's toy chest is based in Flora, Mississippi, where her family hosts an annual toy give-away in honor of her late mother, ensuring no child is without a gift on Christmas. Service, gratefulness and compassion are three things she lives by.

District Leader of the Year

Dr. Wanda L. Clark currently holds the position of Director of Instructional Support Services in the Office of Teaching and Learning. Originally from Tchula, Mississippi, she earned her bachelor's degree from Jackson State University and further pursued her education, obtaining a master's degree from Belhaven University. Additionally, Clark holds specialist and doctorate degrees in Educational Leadership from Mississippi College. With over 23 years of experience, she takes pride in her role as an educator.

One notable achievement in Clark's career is her tenure

as the principal of Sykes Elementary School, during which she and her team successfully transformed the school from a failing to a thriving institution. Clark firmly believes in providing a high-quality education for all scholars, emphasizing the responsibility of educators to ensure they receive it. Guided by Maya Angelou's words, she values the lasting impact of how individuals make others feel and endeavors to serve with dignity and respect.

Beyond her role as a principal, Clark has served in various capacities, including assistant principal, curriculum specialist, master teacher, Cornerstone literacy coach and classroom teacher. While acknowledging the challenges of educating scholars, she emphasizes that it is not only hard work but, more importantly, "heart" work. Driven by a sense of joy, she finds fulfillment in dedicating herself to this meaningful work each day.

Support Staff of the Year

Ella Pepper serves as the Facilities Operations Custodian Supervisor overseeing the north zone. A native of Bolton, Mississippi, she pursued Business Technology at Hinds Community College after graduating from Raymond High School.

Her connection with JPS dates back to 2010 when her children attended Hardy Middle School. Following a basketball game cleanup with the late Fred Sutton, then head custodian, she felt inspired to join JPS. Pepper's journey evolved from head custodian at Cardozo Middle School to custodian foreman (January 2013)

and custodian supervisor (July 2023) due to her unwavering commitment, hard work and collaborative skills with school leaders.

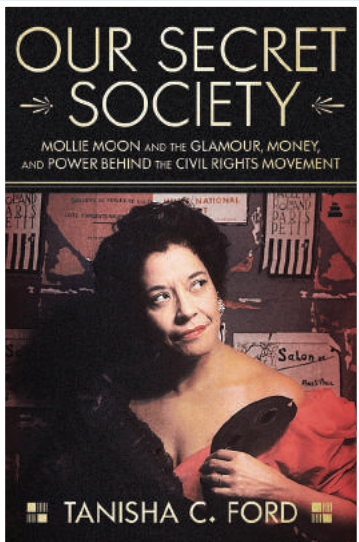
Pepper's daily dedication extends beyond her official role. She contributes to establishing best practices in facility operations, acts as a trainer for staff and serves as a role model for her team. Sandra Robinson, executive director of Facilities and Operations, describes Pepper as a servant leader who leads by example. Her passion for motivating staff and performing selfless acts, from trainings on computer applications to stepping in during staff shortages, exemplifies her commitment to the district at all levels.

About the Awards

In keeping with commitments to cultivating a community of accountability and excellence, Jackson Public Schools annually recognizes team members who make outstanding contributions toward our mission of developing scholars' success and achievement through world-class learning experiences. While their program honors one individual in each category, they acknowledge that these awards are representative of many individuals throughout our district and overall community making a difference in the development of young people.

Based on the state-level recognition programs, the Administrator and Teacher of the Year awards seek to honor individuals who demonstrate a superior ability to inspire their colleagues, faculty and staff; demonstrate exemplary leadership practices; and ongoing, active involvement in the community. Additionally, the Parent of the Year recognizes an outstanding JPS parent, or grandparent, whose significant commitment, through generous gifts of time and other resources, has a powerful effect on the success of the school. The Administrator, Teacher and Parent of the Year will go on to represent Jackson Public Schools in the annual Mississippi Department of Education recognition programs.

In 2020, two awards were added to celebrate the very real contributions of Support Staff and District Leaders, which gives JPS another significant opportunity to highlight exemplary service among the multifaceted teams who help make the district a conducive environment for scholars to grow and develop.



BOOK REVIEW:

OUR SECRET SOCIETY:
MOLLIE MOON AND THE GLAMOUR, MONEY, AND
POWER BEHIND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

BY TANISHA C. FORD

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By Terri Schlichenmeyer
Columnist

The One Percent has everything you do not. A fancy house in a posh place. Designer clothing, fast cars. Friends in high places that know how to get things done. And money, they have lots of that.

The One Percent has it all, and more – and as you’ll see in “Our Secret Society” by Tanisha C. Ford, they once wanted you to have it, too.

Mollie Moon knew what it was like to struggle.

Born in 1907 in Hattiesburg,

Mississippi, she and her mother lived in a boardinghouse meant for migrants when Mollie was a baby. Later, Mollie’s new stepfather moved the family to Gary, Indiana, where Mollie witnessed “economic instability” caused by mill shutdowns. When she was ready to attend college, her mother hoped Mollie would become a pharmacist, which was “one of the most prestigious careers a Negro... could have in the 1920s” but that wasn’t what Mollie wanted.

As a young woman, she left Gary and moved to New York

City, to Harlem, hoping to “make a deep social impact.” There, she met some of Harlem’s elite performers and thinkers, whom she joined in Moscow, then on to Berlin. Rising Nazi influence forced Mollie home to New York where she met Henry Lee Moon, who would one day be her third husband.

With the contacts she’d made in her travels, the strategic friendships she enjoyed with both black and white elites, and the feeling that “Negroes deserved a taste of the good life too,” Mollie honed her skills as a fundraiser

for the Harlem Community Arts Center, and then for National Urban League. She and Henry were “a racial-justice power couple” and they used that power to help large organizations to better the lives of black people all over the country.

As time passed and viewpoints changed, however, some “found it difficult to define the role Mollie played.” She still had influence, Ford says, yet “she did not fit the mold of a civil rights leader.” But someone waiting in the wings did...

Reading “Our Secret Soci-


ety” is a little like taking a trip through time.

Author Tanisha C. Ford first transports readers back to a more genteel era when jazz-age folks dressed for dinner, upper-crust youth enjoyed a new permissiveness, and higher-class citizens held salons in their homes to discuss world affairs. Ford makes this seem like a movie script from a period film, and it’s oddly soothing.


But as the world changed, so does Ford’s story and it’s quite fascinating to see how Mollie Moon seized the social power

she needed with determination, moving easily across racial boundaries at a time when such boundaries seemed like solid walls. Given this, it’s with dread that you’ll approach the latter third of this book, as Ford takes readers to the 1960s and a little slippage of Mollie Moon’s influence.

Still, you’ll wish you knew Miss Mollie and for sure, you shouldn’t miss “Our Secret Society.” You need to know about this almost-hidden slice of history. You’ll like this book one hundred percent.



ZACK WALLACE
Hinds County Circuit Clerk



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Alcorn and Coach Fred McNair part ways

By Tim Ward
Sports Writer

In a relatively surprising move, Alcorn State University will no longer have the coaching services of Fred McNair. McNair wasn't fired, his contract was up and the two sides didn't reach an agreement on an extension.

Interim Athletics Director Robert Raines released the following statement. "I would like to thank Coach Fred McNair for his many years of service and dedication to Alcorn State University. We worked diligently to extend Coach McNair a multi-year contract which would have placed him in the top tier of the conference with both compensation, incentives and additional incentives for assistant coaches," said Raines in a school release. "Unfortunately, we could not reach a mutual agreement."

Rumors have been swirling about McNair being hired by Texas Southern University. However, Texas Southern released the following statement Tuesday. "We had a very brief meeting and the action taken during that meeting was that we were going to take some additional time for consideration," TSU Board of Regents vice chair James Benham told the *De-*

fender.

It appeared Texas Southern was all but ready to announce the hiring of Alcorn State coach Fred McNair as its next football coach, but who will be the Tigers' next head coach is back in limbo after the Board of Regents met Tuesday and deferred making any decision.

Benham said that the board will take additional time to make its decision on who the next Texas Southern head coach will be, though a result is expected to be finalized in the coming days.

On November 20, 2023, Texas Southern University decided not to renew the contract of head football coach Clarence McKinney. His contract officially ran out December 15, 2023. McKinney was 12-35 over his five seasons at TSU. Texas Southern finished the season 3-8 and 2-6 in the SWAC. Ironically one of their biggest wins of the season was against Alcorn State University. Texas Southern defeated Alcorn 44 to 10 on November 12 in Houston.

McNair would be considered a considerable upgrade, if hired. McNair was 48-34 overall and 38-17 during his seven year tenure at Alcorn. He played in back to back

Celebration Bowls in 2018 and 2019. He also won four consecutive SWAC East division titles. Alcorn finished this season 7-4 and 6-2 in the SWAC West Division. Had it not been for the mishap in Houston against Texas Southern, Alcorn would have won the west division this season.

Alcorn didn't waste time naming their new coach, promoting their defensive coordinator Cedric Thomas to head coach. Thomas is a familiar face and will keep things stable for the Braves.

Will McNair seek other opportunities? Will Texas Southern open their coaching search back up? Time will tell. Christmas is next week, maybe a new job will come to McNair as a Christmas present.

One thing for sure, it's dangerous for a program to not renew a good coach before their contract season ends. Other schools can come and offer more money and opportunity.

Jackson State University's Women Basketball coach Tomekia Reed is in contract season. She's definitely due a new contract. She will also have schools lining up for her services if she's not renewed quickly. Just a thought....

Happy Holidays!



McNair

PHOTOS BY TIM WARD



Nissan Canton and Habitat for Humanity celebrate milestone: 15th home build completed in tri-county area CANTON, Miss.



Employees of Habitat for Humanity, Nissan Canton Plant with Wilkes family in Canton, MS PHOTO BY KEVIN BRADLY



Wilkes family expressing gratitude for their new home in Canton. PHOTO BY KEVIN BRADLY

Special to The Mississippi Link

In a collaborative effort, Nissan Canton Vehicle Assembly Plant and Habitat for Humanity Mississippi Capital Area (HFHMCA), Dec. 20, 2023, reached a significant milestone with the completion of their 15th home build in the tri-county area.

More than 100 dedicated employee volunteers from Nissan contributed their time and skills during an eight-day building project from August to October, benefiting Canton resident Sharon Wilkes and her family.

“As we commemorate two decades of being part of Canton’s story, our commitment to building exceptional vehicles has been mirrored by our dedication to our extraordinary community,” said Victor Taylor, vice president of manufacturing, Nissan Canton.

“Our collaboration with Habitat for Humanity embodies our commitment to making positive, lasting impacts. As we extend a helping hand, we’re shaping a

better future for everyone.”

“The corporate support of Nissan Canton allows us to build a safe, decent, affordable home for someone living in Canton,” said Merrill McKewen, executive director at Habitat for Humanity Mississippi Capital Area.

“With their funding and employees as volunteers they are perfect partners in providing a hand up, not a handout.”

The Wilkes’ new home has four bedrooms and two bathrooms and is Energy Star certified. Wilkes is a mother to seven children, and a grandmother to 12 grandchildren. She currently lives in an apartment.

“Through this partnership with Habitat and Nissan, my family and I now can enjoy an affordable energy efficient home, that doesn’t come with woes and worries, and I can afford it,” said Wilkes. “I’m looking forward to having a safe place for my grandchildren to play.”

Nissan’s support for Habitat

began in 2005 in response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Nissan U.S. donated \$1 million, provided 50 Nissan TITAN trucks and mobilized employee volunteers for homebuilding through Habitat affiliates in impacted communities. Since that time, Nissan has contributed more than \$20 million and more than 112,000 volunteer hours in 13 communities to Habitat for Humanity across the U.S.

About Habitat for Humanity Mississippi Capital Area: Habitat for Humanity Mississippi Capital Area is a faith-based organization founded in 1986. We have built or renovated simple and sustainable homes for over 660 families in Hinds, Madison, and Rankin counties. Habitat homes are sold at no profit with an interest-free mortgage to families who cannot qualify for traditional bank loans. Homeownership combined with Habitat’s required financial education allows these families to invest in our community and their future simultaneously.

To learn more about becoming a HFHMCA donor, volunteer or homeowner, please call 601-353-6060 or visit www.habitatmca.org.

About Nissan Canton Vehicle Assembly Plant

Canton Vehicle Assembly Plant celebrated 20 years of manufacturing operations in 2023. The plant employs more than 5,000 people and has assembled more than five million vehicles since it began production in 2003. The \$4 billion factory currently assembles four models: Altima, Frontier, TITAN and TITAN XD. To date, the company has invested \$14 billion in its U.S. manufacturing operations collectively.

For more information about Nissan products, services and commitment to sustainable mobility, visit nissannews.com or nissanmanufacturing.com. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn and see all our latest videos on YouTube.



Nissan VP Victor Taylor

PHOTO COURTESY OF NISSAN

Hinds County School District Weekly Update

ENGAGING-EMPOWERING-ENSURING-EXCELLENCE

UTICA ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL CELEBRATED THANKSGIVING

Utica Elementary/Middle School hosted a Thanksgiving luncheon and the students presented a play called the Spirit of Love. The community was in attendance to capacity and thoroughly enjoyed the program.

